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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 AMMAN 002980

SIPDIS

FOR EB/TRA/OTP - DEBORAH ELLIOTT

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [FAIR JO](#)

SUBJECT: ROYAL JORDANIAN PROBLEMS WITH AIRLINE PASSENGER
INFORMATION SYSTEM

REF: STATE 50622

This is an action request.

1. Ambassador Gnehm received the following letter from Samer Majali, CEO of Royal Jordanian Airlines (RJ) regarding the technical problems RJ faces in meeting the standards set by the Airline Passenger Information System (APIS). Post will reply to Majali drawing on the points in reftel, but would also appreciate any updated guidance from Washington on this issue. We would also appreciate specific guidance regarding RJ -- which, we understand, has incurred considerable fines to date under the system. In our judgment, the technical problems RJ faces described in the letter are genuine. We hope they can be worked out in a timely fashion and stand ready to assist if possible. Jordan has demonstrated its willingness and efforts to comply with enhanced U.S. and ICAO aviation security measures since September 11, doing its utmost to meet and in many cases exceed requirements.

2. Begin text of letter.

His Excellency Ambassador Edward Gnehm
The United States Embassy
Amman
Jordan

Your Excellency Ambassador Gnehm:

In the aftermath of September 11 and the devastating effects it had on the airline industry, we at Royal Jordanian embarked, together with the local authorities on a complete review of our security procedures and passenger screening to ensure the safety of our passengers and aircraft. Fortunately, most, if not all our set procedures were in line with the new guideline set forth by the Civil Aviation and Security Departments in the US and Europe, and in many cases they were more stringent.

As you are aware Your Excellency, we have implemented the Advance Passenger Information System (APIS) system immediately after September 2001, and all efforts are exerted to ensure a high level of accuracy. Since we are using Shannon INS facilities, we were able to further screen the passengers before they set foot on US soil, thus preempting any possible discrepancy. Now and since we will commence our nonstop operation to New York JFK Airport on August 1st, thus our stop in Shannon for the New York flights will be eliminated. To compensate for the suspension of utilizing the immigration facilities at Shannon for New York bound flights. We have instructed all concerned departments to insure that APIS is strictly and meticulously implemented and the passport reading equipment is made immediately available at all points where boarding passes are issued to ensure strict adherence to the new regulations. However, we were promised few months ago to be provided with the good number of scanners so as to verify the information on the passports, visas and green cards, yet unfortunately we still did not receive them. Meanwhile, our Regional Manager in the US is in constant contact with the INS and Customs Departments who are all working on removing any obstacles or technical difficulties that are causing any discrepancy in the transmission of the information.

However, the new requirements set forth by the INS and the US Customs Departments will no doubt have serious and devastating affects on all airlines, and in particular small airlines such as Royal Jordanian. As much as we understand the objectives of the APIS which we are strictly adhering to and support the US government overall goals, yet we see that the demand of 97% accuracy in transmitting the information is an objective that is impossible to achieve. Experience with the system over the past few months demonstrated that anything above 85% is not consistently achievable. Furthermore, some of the data required are not machine-readable, as they need to be keyed in, thus making errors almost inevitable. The fines set forth by the new mandate for failure to have this high rate of accuracy are considered inappropriate, unfair and punitive.

We at Royal Jordanian request that through your good offices, ask the concerned US Authorities to suspend the fines which went into affect as of April this year, until experts

establish a practical system with progressive and realistic performance targets. In addition and as I have mentioned earlier about our upcoming nonstop operation to New York, Kennedy Airport, we request your support with the relevant US Authorities such as the INS, TSA, FAA, Customs Department etc. to advise us regarding any special requirements and facilities this operation will need to facilitate its nonstop operation.

Your usual support and understanding is immensely appreciated, and I shall look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely Yours,

Samer Majali
end text.
Gnehm